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Issue #66
December/January 2007

HEAVEN'S METAL®

Why Am I Doing This?

Welcome to issue #66 of Heaven's Metal Fanzine. For those that remember, issue #66 of HM Magazine was pretty awesome. It had a Living Sacrifice cover story, celebrating their *Reborn* release, as well as insightful interviews with Sammy Hagar and Roger Martinez. That really was a jam-packed and special issue, but that's just so much trivia now. I'd like to talk about two things here: where we're going; and getting a photo of you – the subscriber of Heaven's Metal Fanzine... I was awakened at 2am on Labor Day weekend in 2004, with an 18-point outline of details about doing this publication again as a fanzine. Now it's two years later. We're working like crazy to get these issues out, and I'm not sure why. It sure seemed like God's direction to start it, but now I'm honestly starting to "wander" like the Israelites, wondering why I'm doing all this. If you have any helpful ideas, please send them my way. Secondly, I'd like to design the next cover with a photo collage background with each and every one of our subscribers, so please email me or snail mail me your photo. This'll be fun. My email's on the right here.

Grace and Peace,

ELEMENTS

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METAL TRACKS

Hard-news-for-metal-heads

TY TABOR

INTERVIEW BY DOUG VAN PELT

After 11 studio albums with King's X and over 5 solo / side projects, this musician is anything but lazy. His newly released *Rock Garden* solo album (Inside Out) is easily this Beatlesque balladeer's most rocking and happiest sounding solo outing to date. Listen in as editor Doug Van Pelt talks with Ty Tabor about motocross, music, God, and … yes fellas, they even talked about "feelings." Grab a tissue and read on (just kidding, but go ahead and read).

Dude, just for a second, I have to say this: Pastrana nailed a double backflip at the X-Games, man! How amazing is that?

I was watching that (on tv) live and it was a life changer. It was one of the most amazing moments on tv that I have ever witnessed in my life. The whole electric energy – the anticipation, people…

Continued on next page

News bullets

Zao have just released the very first video to come out of their latest record, *The Fear Is What Keeps Us Here* on YouTube.com. The song is called "My Love My Love (We've come back from the dead)" and the video follows a concept similar to the meaning found within the song, dealing with the theme of seeking vengeance after death. "We [the band] play these four villains who are evil to the core,' explains guitarist Scott Mellinger. "We end up striking down a newlywed couple who come back from the dead to seek revenge." The video was directed by Derek Dale (As I Lay Dying, Demon Hunter, Himsa), who worked under strict time constraints, filming the bulk of the video in just under seven hours before the band sped off just in time to play a scheduled show. Portraying the role of the bad-guys isn't exactly something the members of Zao are accustomed to. "It was neat to play someone who was just completely the opposite of everything we're about," comments Mellinger. "All of us are big horror movie fans, so it was cool being these personalities." The band is currently on tour with Throwdown.

In the decade since **Trans-Siberian Orchestra** (TSO) debuted, the group has sold more than five million albums and performed before more than two million fans in sold-out venues across the country. On Nov. 3, the Wizards of Winter return with their biggest touring production yet – an eight-week, 117-show arena tour that will thrill audiences from coast to coast. Tickets for the entire tour are now on sale. For each ticket purchased, one dollar will be donated to local charities.

Trytan are soon beginning work on a new release entitled *Blood of Kings*.

Bombworks Records is happy to announce the signing of its latest band, **Dagon**, from Michigan. Featuring former members of Bestiary and Summer Dying, Dagon fuses Scandinavian death metal with American 80's rock and metal for a sound that is fresh, melodic, and brutal. They will be going into the studio shortly to record a full length follow-up to their independently released EP, *Secrets of the Deep*. The full length will be available in early 2007, and Bombworks Records will be distributing *Secrets of the Deep* in anticipation of the full length.

New releases for **Adiastasia** and **Tortured Conscience** are now available, and retailers will soon have both of these releases. Blastbeats, ChristianDiscs, and RadRockers will all be running a special. If you buy the new Tortured Conscience CD from any of these three retailers, you will receive a free copy of *The Collection*, a three-way EP released by SotD Records which includes an EP from Tortured Conscience as well as EPs from current Fear Dark Records' band **Royal Anguish** and a band called **Soul of the Savior**. And for those of you who preordered, no worries about missing out on this deal, as each preorder is shipping out with a copy of this CD (including preorders that were only for Adiastasia). This special is limited to the number that each retailer has on hand, so don't wait...

Ty Tabor cont'd

I live for X-Games, as most people who know me know, that's my Super Bowl for the year – X-Games. That's what I care about. I'm a huge Pastrana fan. I've been following him ever since he was 15 years old. I just can't explain how happy I was for him to actually pull that off and not get killed. Man!

When they interviewed him afterwards, he was kinda watching the playback he was using words like, "That was death right there! That's death!"
You got to talk to him? That's awesome!

No, not me, but on the tv…
Yeah, he was watching the review and he goes, 'That's death! That's death! Death, death, death!' I just died laughing.

Okay, after hearing about your stalker episodes, it's funny/strange/interesting to see a song titled "Stalker." Any comments you'd like to make about that?
It's a touchy one. I really did debate whether or not I should put it on the record. The last thing I want to do is get confrontational with a delusional person or persons. The truth is: there are more than one out there that it represents. But I just went through something recently where it all got too close for comfort – too real and too close – with more than one incident. It affected me. It's always been out there, but it's never affected me like recently. It kinda changed my world. It changed how I think about… It changed some of my freedoms of living for awhile. It's a very, very dark, ugly time. I hate what it did to me – how it made me feel, how I felt robbed of my life. There is so much that I could go into, but basically what it came down to is I just had to write that song. I really did it for myself and I wasn't going to put it out there, but then I started feeling like a fake as an artist. That's what it's really about. It's being honest and putting those things out there that are on your heart. So I finally succumbed to the artist side of things and I decided to put it on the record, but it wasn't originally on the record and I did really struggle with putting it on the record.

In speaking about previous solo efforts, one thing I remember you mentioning is how the emotions of such and such a song were a snapshot of a time that was so long gone by the time the album came out and people heard it, assuming you'd still be sad or in a painful funk over something. Do you fear the current happiness vibe on the new album will have run out by the time this album hits stores?
(laughs) You know, I think only God only knows those kind of things. I don't know tomorrow. All I know is when I did this record, it's the record I wanted to do. It happens to be the place I'm at is more positive than it was last time I did a record. There is a difference. I was being more in touch with who I really am as a kid growing up when I did this record. I made the record I always wanted to make. That is at my core of who I am – 70s rock guitar. That's my era. Growing up in school and playing music. That is at my core of who I am. That's even what I do in King's X. It's very 70s. I just wanted to make a rock record. I've just always been afraid to sing vocals on something that rocks hard, because I have just never felt the confidence about my voice. That was always the thing holding me back. I finally just said, 'You know, it doesn't matter. It's what's true to me. It's what I really want to do, and it's what I need to do.'

A couple of things really impressed about musicians: One is drummers, who make their hands and their feet do separate things and different times; and somebody who can play an instrument and sing. That takes real skill.
I'll take it further: It's more amazing to me physically to play bass and sing. I find that to be way more difficult than playing guitar, because it's all about playing individual notes in them. Essentially if it's a busy bass part, it's almost like doing a lead while singing. That really freaks me. Sometimes the stuff Doug has to play and sing at the same time it's nonsense. It's amazing.

Well, someone might call you the "lone Christian" in King's X. How fulfilling, awkward, rewarding, or trying is being a member in this great band?
You know, for me it's like I kind of live outside of… It's hard to put it in words, actually. I think it's an evolving thing over time, too. It changes over time. But for me, I had to early on get over the fact that no one else believes exactly like I do. No one else quite interprets what they believe Scripture to mean exactly like I do. We are all that way – that do attempt to or care to believe Scripture or whatever. We all, as evidenced by denominations, we all have very … extremely varied ideas about what it is that we're reading and about what it says … and even about the history of it and how it got to us. We all have different ideas about it. I know that I don't fit easily into what is portrayed as American Christianity. As a matter of fact… Well, you know. You know that I'm actually more turned off by being even associated with it. I'm so disgusted by so many things I see that are called Christian in America – that to me have nothing to do with Christianity at all. So, I'm sort of a heretic Christian to a lot of Christians, because I don't fit the mold and I don't believe I'm supposed to. So I kind of feel like there's another group of Christians out there that have nothing to do with how Christianity is represented; and I'm one of those – if that makes

Continued on page 7

Disciple returns with their major label sophomore effort *Scars Remain* on November 7th. Filled with hard-rock and metal anthems and power ballads, it's a heavier, meatier album than their previous self-titled release. The band incorporates exceptional songwriting with a level of intensity they haven't displayed in years, while sticking to their rock roots. "I'm screaming as well as singing and the songs are so fun to play," says singer Kevin Young. "The songs are a lot heavier than anything we've done in a while." Disciple is aiming to prove HM Magazine wrong, when they wrote about the previous album: "If this isn't the most successful album of Disciple's career, this reviewer will eat a bug."

Given the unorthodox nature of **Virgin Black**'s current obsession, a series of three requiems, questions have understandably been coming thick and fast on all manner of details. Most prevalent is the question pertaining to potential release schedules, and with all three albums nearing completion, the crucial parties have seen fit to impart a certain amount of clarity. The three albums will be released on a slightly staggered time scale beginning with *Requiem – mezzo forte*, the second in the series, followed by *Requiem – fortissimo* the last in the series and an album of intense heaviness. The first in the series, an all classical affair, *Requiem – pianissimo,* will be the final release. The parade of albums will begin first thing in the New Year with tours to follow.

Jet Circus are set to release *Dance or Die*, containing a heavy-duty dance music remix for every song on their *Look at Death Now* release. Fresh as ever and still in a sound of their own, this release features twelve of the most interesting dance music producers in the world – established or up and coming – which have been picked to use their skills to turn Sweden's legendary metal masters into a pumping dance act, just for this album. Jet Circus are no strangers to wild ideas. In fact, at the time of the release of the debut album, *Step On It,* in 1991, the press wrote that they were destined to create a genre of their own, because of their neck breaking arrangements and their and remarkable sound, which was unlike anything else.

The Showdown will finally be releasing *A Chorus of Obliteration* internationally. This remastered edition of their debut album will be released in Europe by Century Media on November 6. The album includes an exclusive bonus track, called "Give Us This Day," and is enhanced with the music video for "Iscariot." Also, the highly anticipated new album from the band, titled *Temptation Come My Way*, will hit stores February 20, 2007. The band just got out of the studio with mix engineer JR McNeely (Relient K, Underoath, Demon Hunter) putting the final mix touches on all the songs. The twin guitar attack is even more prevalent, making their music even more 80s metal than ever. So, music will be available soon for all you eager fans. On the week the band starts their fall tour with Pillar & Day Of Fire, you will be able to download 2 brand new songs ("Temptation Come My Way" & "We Die Young") from iTunes. Also, a limited edition tour sampler with a song from the record and more will be available at shows on the Pillar tour, but only if you sign up on the band's email list. Look for The Showdown on the cover of the Jan/Feb issue of HM.

As I Lay Dying, headlining the second installment of the *Sounds of the Underground tour 2006*, were recently awarded the coveted "people's choice" award for "MTV2 All Things That Rock." **Tim Lambesis** expresses, "I love awards like this, because they're not political, and it's about the fans being there for us. That means more to the band than anything else."

METAL TRACKS

BLACK IS THE COLOR OF METAL

I love that you brought back Heaven's Metal, but enough with this old school wimpy rock! Death to false metal! Leave bands with old rockers in the past. Let us have more extreme metal in these pages. Long live Antestor! Long live Slechtvalk! Long live Crimson Moonlight!
–Iced Frosting, via internet

OLD SCHOOL RULES!

I love Heaven's Metal Fanzine! Thanks for bringing it back, but please keep the cookie monster vocals and bands whose names I can't pronounce out of these pages. Bring on Michael Sweet, Bride, and Whitecross! All of these artists have or will be releasing new albums, and I think you should be giving them print.
–Aqua Net, via internet

Ed – I think both of you guys are true false metallers – making up names and mythical arguments just to get your names and foolish ideas in print. I oughta turn you over my knee right now... We hope you enjoy the mix of old school and new. If you don't like it, come join our editorial team and show us how it should be done. I'm serious!

WHY IGNORE THE OLD SCHOOL?

It has come to my attention that there is a lack of support for the older style Christian metal. Yes, there are loads of fans out there on websites and some who will still purchase merchandise and CDs from these bands and log on to web pages. But for the bands who would like to tour once again, it seems (that) to book one show is an event. Most of these bands have since moved on to other projects as have promoters of their day. I remember a time when an agency called Master Rock located here in Florida booked mostly all Christian Metal and concerts were happening about once a month if not sooner. But styles do change as do tastes in music. Christian metal of today – Norma Jean, Zao, Underoath – are on Warped Tours, OzzFest, and other secular metal/alternative tours. My question is this: If there are bands such as Poison, Cinderella, and even Motley Crue out there on the road, why aren't bands like Whitecross, Bride, Holy Soldier or even alternative acts like 77s still able to book solid tours? Ozzfest went out and took valid heroes of their time, such as Iron Maiden, Judas Priest on the road with the newer acts for the younger crowd to see the history and understand they wouldn't be where they are if it weren't for these bands. I know Cornerstone has done the same as Stryper recently played. My thought is this for the promoters out there who book the cutting edge stuff of today: Pay tribute to older bands and book them once in a while.
–John Sutherland, via internet

Ed – Finally! A real letter from an actual person!

THE THEATER OF DREAMS

My son is a huge Dream Theater fan and I am trying to find out if there are any Christian bands that are similar to them in sound and style. Can you offer any suggestions? My listening experience has been more on the mainstream Christian pop side, a la Steven Curtis Chapman and tobyMac, and the stations in our area don't play anything harder than that. Thanks!!
–David Frank, via internet

Ed – There's a few bands worth checking out. For starters, try: Visual Cliff, older Balance of Power, 7 Days, Images of Eden, Pyramaze.

VISUAL CLIFF APPEALING

After listening to Visual Cliff on the Sep/Oct '06 sampler CD, I checked them out on CD Baby. I ended up buying the CD and must say this is a 5 star album in my opinion. Also, I can't wait for The Seventh Power CD to come out, so I can check them out too. Thanks for the CD.
–George Del Signore, via internet

WHY ARE THEY FALLING AWAY?

Been a fan of the mag since the glory days of Christian heavy metal. I am concerned by what is happening to the artists of those days. It seems many are falling away. The exploits of Roger Martinez are well documented. But now we are seeing so many more. Gary Lenaire (Tourniquet), and others... Now I look at the myspace page of Jimmy Brown of Deliverance and it references porn as favorite movies, etc. I am sure there are probably even more that I do not know about. These guys were people we looked up to back in the day that are now openly campaigning for the other side. Perhaps some words of encouragement are needed in future issues for those of us who see this as distressing? Or perhaps you could give me your thoughts on this topic? Thanks.
–Todd Walker, via internet

Ed – This is distressing. My honest advice? Cry in prayer; weep and intercede in Jesus' Name. In this way, even if our prayers aren't answered, at least we are changing.

[nothin' but] **News bullets**

DecembeRadio will take their signature, guitar-driven rock sounds to the races as they are scheduled to perform on October 29th, in Hampton, Ga., at NASCAR's Bass Pro Shops 500 race. The band will perform the national anthem as well as a complete set of songs prior to the starting time of the race. Around 180,000 attendees are expected to gather to watch the nationally televised and highly publicized event.

Kekal have finished recording *The Habit of Fire*, and the album has 11 tracks and runs for over 70 minutes, and it is "our most ambitious album we've ever recorded so far! It is the mix of the contrasting craziness of *1000 Thoughts of Violence*, the progressive melody of *Acidity*, with a bunch of new interesting elements that are not only new to KEKAL, but even they have never been done before in metal!" Negotiations are under way, and they expect to have three record labels releasing the album, each exclusively for their own market territory (North America, Europe, and Indonesia/Southeast Asia). Watch out for December or January release date.

Dbeality will be entering the studio on November 28th to begin recording their second release. The new CD will be produced by Neil Kernon (Queensryche, Dokken, Hall & Oates) and Robert Sweet will be back to play drums.

The 27th annual "Christmas Rock Night" (CRN) will be on Dec 1-2 in Ennepetal Germany (near Düsseldorf) with 25 Christian bands performing: **Disciple**, **Tree63**, **Thousand Foot Krutch**, **Project 86**, **Kids In The Way**, **RED**, **Falling Up**, **Decyfer Down**, **Building 429**, **Fireflight**, **Becoming The Archetype**, **October Light**, **Make Up Your Mind**, **Allee der Kosmonauten**, **Crushead**, **D-Projekt**, **Opposition of One**, **Adrian Thompson**, **Arson**, **Waiting for Steve**, **Arne Kopfermann**, **Seventh Avenue**, **Echtzeit**, **Toelz** and **Freequency**.

Liberty n' Justice is back in the studio recording the follow-up to this year's release, *Soundtrack Of A Soul*. The album is going to be a full-production acoustic rock record entitled *Independence Day*. It will feature 12 "all-star singers" on 11 songs. The CD will be once again produced by Mike Layne.

We sadly report the passing away of bassist **Tim Cooper** of **Ashen Mortality** on August 17. Details can be found at blackplanet0.freeserve.co.uk/amnews.htm

Early **Saint** guitarist **John Mahan** will be joined by long time Saint vocalist **Josh Kramer** in Kansas to launch a solo project, which at this time is called, **Mahan and Kramer of Saint**. No album title as of yet. More information, as it becomes available, will be found on Josh's site at saint777.net.

Ken Tamplin had a song on the soundtrack for the movie *Flicka*.

Stryper pulled out of its Monterrey, Mexico date after Slayer reportedly cancelled their performance after learning they would be co-headlining with Stryper. Stryper is currently considering a re-scheduled date.

Ty Tabor cont'd

sense. So, I guess in the context of being in the band and being with guys that don't… We all three have totally different beliefs – I think. But, of course, that's just my opinion. Jerry may see it that we have really a lot of the same beliefs – as far as his view. And that's the thing about it. We all see it differently, as far as the three of us. We see it totally differently, and we connect on a lot of areas, but in general, the idea of Christianity and the life of Jesus as being something… It's different for each one of us. So, I had to learn to just… You know, this isn't really a 'Christian band,' as far as it wasn't a band that got together and said, 'Hey, this is our goal – to do this or this as Christians.' It was never like that with us in any way. It was more of a 'Let's attempt to be real artists. Let's attempt to really be real artists and that is the calling. That is, in my opinion, what we're supposed to do with our talents. It seems in that direction (that) it forces you to have to allow each other person to freely express who they really are and not come down for doing that, but as I said, allow it. As long as the relationship is open to me also being able to share what I believe and say my piece in it, as long as we are all able to allow each other to do that, I love working as a band – even if we do have different opinions and viewpoints and everything. To me, that kind of teamwork…it's a forced tolerance in some weird way that allows you to get over some of your own hang-ups, I think. That's the way I've seen it. I've seen it as a healthy… It's something that I'm glad I've been a part of. It stretched my own mind and understanding of what it is that I do believe by being committed in a band with guys that all have entirely different beliefs. I hope that makes sense.

Okay, back to *Rock Garden* again: You mentioned wanting to do this record for a long time. Have you been working on this record or kind of compartmentalizing pieces or songs for years now?
This has been a matter of actually preparing for it in any way, it's been more of a thing in my own mind of knowing that that's the most true thing to who I am, but it's also usually whatever that thing is, there are other areas of life, too. It's the most true thing that represents who I am musically, and to accurately prove yourself to be able to do that is very hard for me, because it's very much like opening a diary to the world – not just with your words, but who you are. How you represent your sound. That always leaves you open to people hating it and making bad comments about things that are the most dear to you. So, it's a difficult thing for me to do, but it was a very true thing for me to do. I'm glad. Finally I said, 'I'm going to do it.' It was just a matter of me making up my mind to have the guts to be honest with myself and do what it is I really wanted to do. I've always been intimidated by stepping up and doing heavy rock without someone else doing the singing. I can do it comfortably in King's X, because, you know, Doug Pinnick is singing. So, I can write something that needs serious vocals and know that he can do it. When I'd do my own things, I was always afraid of being able to adequately put vocals on top of it if it was too vicious musically. But that's what's in my heart – some of the music I just wanted to slam and be rocking. That is what has been the focus of most of my life, musically. I've just been held back by my own voice in my own mind. I just had to get over this it and just say, 'Just do the best you can. That's all anyone can do, but just be real.' And being real meant stepping it up a little bit.

Alright. I'm glad you did. I think you nailed it.
Thank you.

What do you hope to see happen with this album? Why do you, Doug, and Jerry continue to put out solo albums?
You know, it's funny, but I honestly don't think in terms of what will happen with an album. The way I am is that's a blank slate. That's completely something

Continued on page 12

In these evil times we will rise!

FD022

Royal Anguish
Tales of Sullen Eyes EP
Re-release of the latest EP of this USA based death-gothic metal band. Produced by Erik Rutan (Hate Eternal/Morbid Angel)

FD023

Eluveitie - Spirit CD
The Swiss celtic pagans are back with their first full-length album. For fans of Cruachan and Skyforger. Produced by Markus Stock (The Vision Bleak)
Artwork by Travis Smith (Opeth)

FD024

Royal Anguish - A Journey Through The Shadows Of Time CD
Brand new album of this USA based death-gothic metal band. Artwork by Samuel Durling

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THEOCRACY | PROG POWER

INTERVIEW BY CHRIS BECK

Photo by Sue Myers Smith

"By the grace of the Holy One, I am free from this world of desolation. Free from greed, lust and selfishness, to nevermore be a slave to this wicked flesh." Thus proclaim the lyrics on the song "New Jerusalem" from Theocracy's debut album. Rarely are an album's lyrics the most memorable part of what one hears, yet that is exactly the case with the album *Theocracy*. This is in addition to the fantastic music and vocals provided by the ultra-talented Matt Smith. We recently asked Matt about his lyrical inspiration and what listeners can expect to hear on the new album, whenever it comes out...

Chris Beck: Theocracy played at the ProgPower USA pre-party this year. How did this huge opportunity come about and how did the concert go?
Matt Smith: I was contacted several months ago by Shane Dubose, the guy who puts the pre-party together. He said he loved the album and wanted us to play, so of course we took him up on it. He said he'd wanted us to play before, but he'd heard that I didn't have a lineup put together yet, so he waited until this year, when we were ready. The show went great! We had a blast and it seemed to go over really well. We only played 45 minutes, and it flew by.

Is this the first concert that Theocracy played as a full band? Tell us a little about the new band members.
No, we've played several shows now, but that was definitely the biggest so far. We've played a lot of local shows here in Athens, Georgia. Athens isn't a very metal town though, so a lot of times it's a very small crowd. We've had some good shows, but it was much more fun to play in front of a large group of fans who actually knew the songs and were into the music. As for the band members, Shawn Benson is our drummer, and he's incredible. He's got the speed and the technicality down, but he also plays with a lot

"I think it's funny how a lot of the same people who would call Christian lyrics cheesy would be fine with lyrics about knights and dragons or whatever, ha ha..."

of personality and creativity, which is sometimes lacking in power metal. As soon as we started jamming, he really took the songs to a new level. Josh Sloan is our bass player. He and I grew up in the same circles; we went to the same school and the same church. He's a great bass player, and also a very good singer, which was very important for the live side of things. The newest member is Jon Hinds, our second guitarist. I met Jon around the time the album came out, and he loved the music. We jammed several times and he's a great player who just keeps improving, so we decided to ask him to join officially. He can also sing well, so that's another plus. I'm very happy with our lineup.

Did you attempt to reproduce in concert the group choruses that are such a large part of the songs on your debut album, *Theocracy*?
Well, as much as you can with three singers, ha ha. We worked out the most important harmonies according to each guy's range, and it came out pretty well. That's something that I'm sure will get better and better as Josh and Jon get more comfortable singing on stage. Some bands pipe in backing vocals over the PA, but I don't really dig that. We play some keyboard intros over the PA since we don't have a keyboard player, but I wouldn't really feel right about vocals and things like that. I like live shows to have a slightly more raw feel, anyway.

On *Theocracy* you wrote every song, played every instrument on each song and even produced the album. Why did you choose to do everything by yourself (very well, I might add)?
Thanks. It was just by necessity. I really wanted a band, but I just hadn't found anyone by that point. I had written a strong batch of songs, and just started demoing them like I always had. At some point in the process, Deron Blevins from MetalAges Records heard some demos, and wanted to release a full-length album. So the demos eventually became the debut.

One of the few complaints I've heard about the album is that you used a drum machine. Why did you decide to do this and, if you could go back and do it over, would you use a drummer to play on the songs?
Well, it was kinda the same thing completely out of necessity. I would have loved to have had a real drummer, but I just didn't know anyone who could play that stuff. It was frustrating at the time, but everything eventually worked out in the Lord's timing.

Many lyrics on Theocracy openly praise, give thanks to or call out to God. Some would say that these lyrics don't "fit" with heavy metal. Still others would say that you do this at the risk of sounding "cheesy." I feel you have traversed this path well and found a fine balance of your lyrics being inspirational without being preachy – especially on songs such as "Mountain" and "New Jerusalem." How do you approach writing lyrics for each song? What is your motivation?
Well, to be honest I don't really give much thought to what people think, because if they want to criticize, they will. Most people have been very kind, though; I think, at the very least, people think the lyrics are well-written, and they can tell that there is thought put into them. Besides, I think it's funny how a lot of the same people who would call Christian lyrics cheesy would be fine with lyrics about knights and dragons or whatever, ha ha. I've been writing lyrics since I was in middle school, and it's always come very naturally for me. I just write about whatever is on my mind at a given time; it can be a seed of an idea that develops into something bigger, or something going on in my life or the lives of people around me. I have a lot of "I should write a song about that" moments, ha ha.

Lyrically, which song has the most meaning to you and why?
That's tough, but I would probably say "Mountain." Even though that song is about the high points in our spiritual journeys, it has a deeper meaning to me because a friend of mine actually trusted Christ on Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Africa. That friend later became my wife, so it was a pretty amazing thing, and that's where most of the imagery in that song comes from.

The music on *Theocracy* has a heavy European power metal influence. Comparisons to Tobias Sammet's Avantasia are frequently made. Was there a certain sound you were aiming for with the album? What bands have influenced you?
I have a ton of musical influences. I love a lot of the European power metal stuff, and classic metal, thrash, and so on there are really too many bands to name. I grew up on the usual diet of Queensryche, Dream Theater, Iron Maiden, Metallica, etc. I wasn't really making a conscious effort to follow any certain style on the album; I just wanted to make the kind of music that I love, and that's heavy, bombastic metal with huge melodies.

The cover art on the debut album is excellent. How much input did you have on this?
Yeah, Mattias Noren did a great job on it. I had a lot of input, of course. We kind of came up with it together, because I had some general ideas, but I couldn't exactly visualize the cover. Mattias was great in taking the general concepts and random ideas I had, and turning it into a killer cover.

***Theocracy* was released in 2003. I know you and the band have been working hard on a new album. Compared to the debut album, what similarities or changes should fans expect on the next album?**
We're not making any particular intentional changes stylistically, but it's kinda like everything has been taken up a notch. It has the same quality of songwriting, but much better singing and much better production, drumming (of course), and so forth. You'll still hear the melodies, the big choirs, the emotion, the riffs, and everything people expect from Theocracy. I'm not the kind of guy to say, "This is our best album yet," like a lot of bands, because as cliche, as it is, there's really no way for me to say something is better than something else when I'm that close to it. But I will say I feel like we really have something special with this record; I feel like the songs are just very powerful and I think people will be very happy with it. It feels like a once-in-a-lifetime kind of album to me.

What are some of the topics the songs on the next album will address?
Temptation and pride are a couple of issues that are talked about. There is a song about the folly of looking at the faults of other people to judge your own righteousness. There are also some lyrics that are about just being thankful; kind of praise songs in a way.

When do you think the new album will be released? What do you have left to complete on the album?
I've got a lot of vocals left to do, and a lot of production things. But the main things that make the timetable such a big question mark are the things that are out of my hands, like record labels and artwork and stuff like that. Ultimately, those are the details that will determine exactly how long it will take. It should definitely be sooner rather than later, though. I've got the third album mostly written as well. What I'd like to do is release both of them a year apart, but obviously there are many other factors that will determine whether that happens or not.

Are you able to make a living through Theocracy? If not, what other work do you do?
No, not even close at this point. I have a small recording studio, and also help at another studio here in town, in addition to a full-time job as a technical writer. Before that, I did graphic design work. Trying to do all that stuff, plus rehearse and play shows and work on the album and be a husband can be overwhelming. The album would have been done a year and a half ago if I

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JIMMY BROWN

INTERVIEW BY JOHN TINKER

Everyone loves Jimmy P. Brown II. However, not everyone knows about his split personalities. Jimmy has enjoyed a career in music that others could only dream of touching. His music with Deliverance, Fearful Symmetry and now Jupiter 6 has shown Jimmy's ability to roll with the musical changes over the last two decades. Join John Tinker (pictured above) as he sits down with Jimmy P. Brown II to get the scoop on all things past and present. Sit down yourself and enjoy the following interview but leave room for your other personalities to read along with you.

Tink. Today I find myself in the beautiful Southern Nevada desert with Jimmy P. Brown II of Deliverance fame, among other things. Good to see you! How are you, bro.?
JPB2. Very good.

Tink. Let's just start with what brought you to Vegas?
JPB2. What didn't bring me to Vegas? Booze, girls (laughs loudly). Nah, just kidding. We were just looking for a cheap place to live. An opportunity to live in a decent rent space and be able to raise the kids, I needed to get a regular job and this place was always a dream for me because I loved coming here. We moved to the Midwest for about a year and I hated it. No offense to the people in St. Louis, the humidity, not for me.

You know, I came to talk about Jupiter 6 but before we do that, let's talk about Deliverance. Give us an update, what's going on with the big "D".
Update: This year we started toting around with the idea of doing a Deliverance thing again. There was a possibility of working with George Ochoa again, but things didn't pan out. He did, however, work with me on the Jupiter 6 project. He came in and did a couple of solos. We had some fun revisiting, but he just started a new company and he's pretty busy. Then I hooked up with Mike Phillips and Jim Chaffin of Facedown. Jim is an honorary member of Deliverance because he's played so many shows with us over the years. Mike was on the *Stay of Execution* and *Live E.P.* with me. He's a phenomenal guitar player, so we started talking. Jupiter 6 was almost done, Fearful Symmetry was almost done. I looked at Jae (Corin Jae Scott) and said, "You want to do a 'D' thing?" We just kind of shook our heads and said, "Yeah, sounds good." Mike fit right in. We got a killer new bass player named Tim Kronyak, plays just like Manny Morales. On drums none other than Jim Chaffin who is sharing dual duties with Once Dead.

The burning question, is there going to be another "D" album?
Ahhhh, YES. There is. It's in the works as we speak. I do want to make it a concept record. Keep it along the lines of what Deliverance has always done. *Assimilation*, which was released in 2001, was a mistake. That was a record that should have never been made. Although there were some choice cuts on it, it wasn't a Deliverance comeback record. This is going to be a true return to form of old

Deliverance.

So it will be metal?
This thing is going to be heavy as stink!

Excellent! That's the "D" update, how about Fearful Symmetry?
As most people know, we've already released a couple of records. 2002, *This Sad Veil Of Tears* and then *Loss Of Balance* came out 2 years later and was picked up by a label in Florida. Unfortunately, the owner, founder and my close dear friend Carl Crandell, passed away last year. We never saw anything to true fruition with it. Only about six thousand copies sold over the internet.

We lost some good people last year, Jessie Rivera.
Jessie Rivera, another great drummer I met some years back and don't forget Dime Bag. Rest their souls.

Amen.
As far as Symmetry is concerned. We're working on a new record. The first album was very industrial; the second was more synth pop. This album is going to be very dark, true industrial. It's the real deal.

Where can people score the Fearful Symmetry discs?
They can go to our web site, fsmuzic.com or fearfulsymmetry.net.

Alright, Jupiter 6, this is pretty wild stuff. Tell me about it.
It's a theater rock project. It's loosely based on my life. My experience with Deliverance in the early days. In 1985 and on through the Christian music scene. I'm trying to just find myself now in a new world where music has just gone by so quick; I'm trying to review it all. The guys in the story, Peter Braun, Helmut Stegel, Spirios Filios, Remedios Innocentes and Darby Flowers are all trying to find their way back into making music again, but they only know their one way. It's theatrical, it's story lined and yes, it's hard to play in the space suits.

Who's Peter Braun?
Peter Braun has appeared in a couple of different projects through out the years. Including the Swirling Eddies with Terry Taylor. Peter Braun is me. Peter is my middle name. Before our grandfather changed our name it was Braunstein. Then it was Braun and in the late 1940's it became Brown.

Is there a tentative release date for this project?
Yes. November 7th. It will be released on Retroactive Records. It will be available at their web site and our web site.

(In the background Jimmy's phone rings)

JPB2. It's Mike Phillips. Mikee. We are being interviewed by Tink and you have interrupted.
MP. Who?
JPB2. Tink. Hang on, Mike.
MP. You got it.
JPB2. So, as far as Jupiter 6 is concerned, it's on release, Nov. 7th. The album is titled *Back from Mars*, and the beautiful thing is, it will be on I tunes, so you can down load it with full art work. And wait till you see the art work. Killer!

Tink. Since we have Mike on the phone. How are you, Mike?
MP. I'm good, how are you?

I'm excellent. So, tell me about this new version of "D." What's your take?
I had been talking to Jimmy a few months back, about doing some vocals on some stuff I had been recording because basically, Face Down wasn't happening any more because we lost our singer. So Jimmy called me a couple of days later and asked me if I was interested in doing a new Deliverance project. My wife and I prayed and talked about it. We felt like it was cool so we went ahead and said yes. We're excited about it, it's really cool. I can't wait to get going, writing new material. We are right now in the process of learning the set list of older classic Deliverance as well as the newer stuff.

So, you guys have rehearsed. Did it feel good?
JPB2. Oh yeah.
MP. Yeah, the first rehearsals went great. We were just kind of feeling each other out and right away me and Jimmy were on the same page. We had another drummer in the picture and that hasn't really worked out. So we are in the process of trying out a couple of other guys.

In the meantime you have Jim Chaffin?
MP. Exactly! He's kind of doing us a favor. We are still trying to find the guy. Of course Jim can step in and play anything. So it's real cool.
JPB2. Thanks Mikee, call me later.
MP. Will do.

(Jimmy hangs up and we focus back on Jupiter 6)

Jupiter 6, listening to this stuff, there are some thought-provoking words. It's well written. I always listen to the lyrics and wonder, what was the guy thinking. So let me ask you about a few of the songs.
Sure.

"From Here Till Ever?"
When I first started Fearful Symmetry, I had been writing a lot of poetry; love, lust and everything else. I was going to use a lot of it with Symmetry and never did. I started studying Kabala, Judaism and a lot of esoteric teachings. Just for my own personal knowledge. It wasn't like I was in search of something as much as I just love knowledge. And being Jewish I wanted to study a lot of the Jewish history. Kabala being one. At any rate, the first 2 Fearful Symmetry records very much went that way. With Jupiter 6 it seems like that became an outlet for a lot of my sappy love songs. That song, "From Here Till Ever," is about when I met my wife. We met when we were 13. A lot of the songs on there, there is a song called…

"In A World Of…"
"In A World Of You And I." Yeah.

Love song?
Yes, very much another one about my wife. Then we did the Kinks cover, "All Day and All of the Night." It's a well rounded release of that part of me. For anybody who has a great relationship with their wife.

"Lucidia?" A very interesting song. Is there any relationship between Lucidia and maybe 80's Los Angeles?
Uh huh, yeah, you got it right there. That's exactly what "Lucidia" is. Lucidia is the capital city of Mars in the story. It's where J6 made their claim to fame. The parallel story is Deliverance, L.A., 1986. You hit the nail on the head. It's that whole angst of I love you and I miss you, but I hate you as well. That's why the line "Those crowded rooms and people that think they love you, at times I miss you so, and others not at all".

You've had a long career: twenty years.
Yes.

Certainly you have had some emotional ups and downs.
Yeah.

Would you say that the Jupiter 6 project represents a more comfortable Jimmy Brown?
I would say no question. And this sounds really terrible, but it's not to downplay anything that I've done with Deliverance. *Camelot* was a real rough time for me. That was 1995 and I knew I was breaking up the band. I felt that Deliverance had its run. At that time grunge had come in. We were not fitting in. We weren't speed metal anymore. We were having a real hard time finding our place. I knew that we had to at least take a break, if not just break up. I did so in an irrational manner, it wasn't what I enjoyed doing any longer; it wasn't coming from my heart. The music that was coming out was being done in a business fashion, because I needed a paycheck. It sounds crappy and I hate saying it, but it's the truth. I needed a paycheck and so I was churning out music. Fearful Symmetry was an experimentation of something I always wanted to do. Being a fan of Bowie, Kraftwerk, Gary Numan, The Human League and Thomas Dolby, I always wanted to do electronic music. I just couldn't afford the keyboard back to the early 80's. If you wanted a keyboard you needed 5 grand.

Today a 90 dollar Casio does the same thing.
Yeah. I always wanted to do a record like that. But it wasn't necessarily out of heart and soul like with

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Ty Tabor cont'd

that will write itself in time. And I can't wait to see what that will be, but I don't have any notions what it is. It may just sell absolutely nothing. It may sell a couple. I have no way of knowing. I tried to be happy with what it is I'm doing and try to support it as best I can – you know, do whatever it is I can to help the record company let the rest of the world know that it is out there. I do want people to know that it's out there, but after that point, that's really as far as I think about it. I think I went through so many years in King's X where there was so much hype around us and so much press. With every album release, we had all these expectations and all this, 'Oh, I hope it reaches this mark of sales,' you know what I mean? You have all these things, but once you go through a few years of let-downs, you learn that's kind of wasted energy – at least for me – that I don't really need to be focusing on. And I've really learned to be at that point. As long as I can be happy with it and know that I'm doing what I can to help support it, whatever happens, I have to be happy with it.

What do you like and dislike about the music you're hearing around you?

I tend to be retro. I tend to go back to listen to things. I don't tend to listen to a whole lot of stuff that is actually right now happening. It's sort of like, after a couple of years, in all the other stuff falls by the wayside and good stuff is still standing, and then I give it a chance. Instead of having to sift through so much garbage to find the good stuff, I sort of wait around for the good stuff to surface. That's what I kind of find my listening habits have been. But recently I've been going back and re-listening to the first three Radiohead albums. I just think those are really amazing records. Each one is totally separate from each other. Being real artists, I think, is what it's about. Real artistic expression in an awesome way. That's had an impact on me – kind of listening to that stuff again and getting re-inspired by it. I've been listening to this one band that I've never heard of before until recently. Speaking of Travis Pastrana, the Fuel Network, Fuel TV has some music every once in a while that pops up in the middle of… Are you familiar with Fuel TV?

I know about it, but I've never watched it. I don't think…

It's my favorite channel, basically, and I watch it constantly, because it's nothing but extreme sports and people really pushing their limits. It's really inspirational, in my opinion. At least for me it is very inspirational to watch. What happens is they've got several weekly shows, where they follow somebody skateboarding around or… there's this one show called *First Hand*, where they cover in a 30-minute documentary on one person. They'll take somebody like Travis Pastrana and just do a 30-minute cap on who they are and what they do and all that. During that they always show these guys doing extreme maneuvers and everything and they always pop in really interesting music of artists I've never heard of on record labels that I've never heard of. That's what I've been inspired by lately. I'll catch something every once in a while on that – something I'll never hear on the radio or never be exposed to it anywhere else, as far as I know. I've had several things like that where the band pops up and I would go buy the album. There's been some hit and miss. I've gotten some that I thought, 'Well, it had about one good song…' But I ran across an album recently from watching one of those shows on tv, and it was a band called Midwest Product. Specifically, the album is called… I should pull it up on the iPod just to make sure I give you the right name of the album, because they have more than one and it's only this one album that I really love, but I think it's called… I'm blanking right now. It's called *World Series of Love*. That particular album by those guys is like an electronica album but with guitar stuff sort of grafted into it that's not normal for electronica. I love it. I've been playing it over and over and over recently. I'm the only human being I know that even – when I mention their name – has ever heard of 'em. But, for all I know in the electronica world they may be huge. But I was unaware of them. I can't stop listening to it. It's some great stuff in a different way.

What are some things you do personally to challenge yourself and improve your playing?

I don't really do much to challenge myself to improve my playing (laughs). I'm always hesitant to admit that, when people ask me about my practicing or whatever, but the truth is I just don't. It is all connected to the heart – as as I'm concerned – and then it follows to the hands. So, I am always way more concerned with that – with the inspirational side of life in general. Like what we've been talking about. I truly get great inspiration from F&X guys and the way they push their limits and the beauty and artistry of it and everything. The impossibility of what they're achieving… I'm a rider, I know how difficult what they're doing, because I ride. I could never dream of ever having been … of having the skill to do what I see those guys doing daily. Even my dreams aren't that good. So, it's really inspirational to me in general, and that's what flows to the music. I like to be inspired. If I see something that's inspirational, I don't care what subject matter, I gravitate toward it. Rather than playing a bunch of licks, looking for something new to inspire me, it comes from everywhere outside of playing. The playing results.

Cool. It's always kind of interesting how that happens, because you have always struck me as kind of being consistent with that kind of answer, and, you know, I've heard that you were in a band called Matthew back in the day. You're like a typical high

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RETROACTIVE RECORDS

JUPITER VI – BACK FROM MARS
Wild, musical brilliance from metal icon, Jimmy Brown (Deliverance). A cauldron of vibrant creativity, with infectious hooks from start to finish! Rock critics are calling *Back From Mars* an important, breakthrough record! For fans of Deliverance, The Killers, David Bowie and Iggy Pop!

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Theocracy cont'd

didn't have to work a day job, I'm sure. But all I can do is work my hardest; I would love to get to the point where I can live off of music someday, but the Lord's taken care of us so far, so I'm very thankful and very blessed.

With so many things going on, many musicians are challenged to find the time to work on improving their skills. What specific efforts have you made to improve your musical and vocal performance since the release of *Theocracy*?
I've done a ton of singing. I didn't realize how much better the vocals had gotten until I went back and listened to the first album. I feel like the vocals sound much more confident and powerful on this album. That's just the natural progression of playing shows and rehearsing and recording, and the experience that comes with it. Also, I've gotten ten times better at the production side of things, as that's a big hobby of mine and I love that part of it as well. So, the new album is definitely going to sound better.

Do you have any last words for the readers of Heaven's Metal?
Thank you all from the bottom of my heart for supporting Theocracy. I am so excited about this new album and I just cannot wait for you all to hear it. I promise that it's going to be worth the wait. Please stay behind us, and check theocracymusic.com for updates. God bless!

✖

Jimmy Brown cont'd

Deliverance. The mid era of Deliverance, especially *Learn*, *River Disturbance* – that was just right out of the heart and soul of Jimmy. Its killer! Since then there really hasn't been any thing like that. As much as I love Symmetry, it is the sterile side of me. The left side of the brain. Logical, reasoning, thinking, systematic. Jupiter 6 is the right side of the brain. The love, the emotion. Just the absolute soul of everything that I do and I am. It started as a joke. The late Carl Crandell asked me if I wanted to do a rock project. Like Diamond Dogs or Bowie, Lou Reed or Iggy Pop. I said "No." And then one day, and I'm not lying, I just woke up and Jupiter 6 popped out of my head. I started writing the story. So I called Carl and said "Dude, I want to do it. That sort of 70's glamish, punkish, rock." He said, "Great." I told him, "Only 1 problem. I don't own a guitar, all I have are synthesizers." He said, "Let me see what I can do." 2 days later I had a check, fed-exed to me. He said, "Go buy drums, bass, guitars, amplifiers and whatever it is you need to make this record." I got scared. I saw the money and the first thing I thought was, 'bet it on red.' We went and bought all this gear I couldn't play. I had not played drums, bass or guitar for years. I started working on it and within 3 months the first song that came out was "Back from Mars." I sent it to Carl and he went nuts. "Make the record." It took about 6 months.

Cool song. I heard the German version.
Zurich von Mars.

Do you speak fluent German?
No. I wish. Very little. My father is a native. My family is from Germany, we are German Jews, believe it or not.

I think people will get a kick out of the German version. For more info folks can go to jupiter6.com or for "D" info myspace.com/thebigdlives.
Please do.

Well, that's all I got. I want to thank you for coming. It was great talking to you. I wish you success on the new project. Thanks again.
No worries, Tink.

✖

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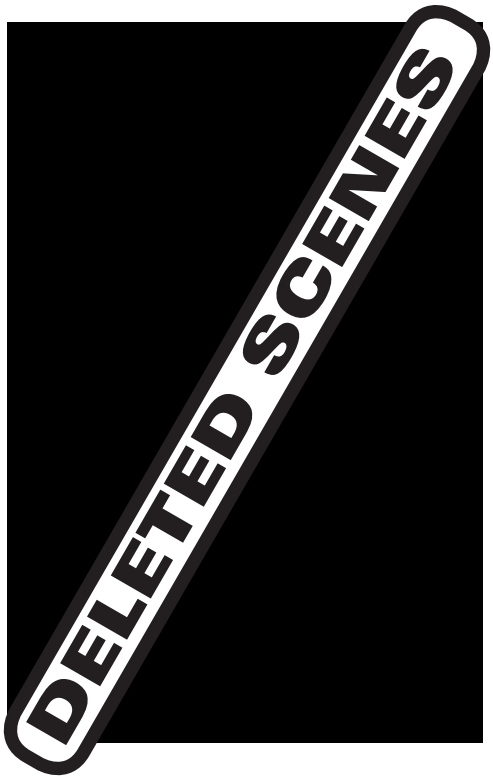

What Steel Prophet Says

Like most any movie, the conversation between Steel Prophet guitarist, Steve Kachinsky, and editor Doug Van Pelt had some "deleted scenes" that were cut due to length. Some of the material was hard to cut and lose forever, so we've brought it back this issue as kind of a "bonus feature." We've done this as well with a few quotes from the Nov/Dec issue of HM's interview with Mastodon. We hope you enjoy both.

[Talking about Dio's voice]:

Steve: It's hard to think of some place where he sings just lackluster or anything like that, you know?

Mmhmm.
It's like ... I couldn't name you a song.

What is your take or your thoughts on some of the bands that have played their music under the banner of Christian heavy metal – like Stryper or even modern day bands like POD?
Like who?

Uhh, POD they're on the radio a lot right now with a single called "Southtown."
Ohh yeah, yeah. They are actually a Christian band?

Yeah.
I didn't know that. I don't know. It's like some bands, like Styper... Living out here in LA, it's like I was in some contact with some people that knew them, you know? Various members and, you know, they said that it wasn't sincere, you know? Those guys weren't for real. They were ... maybe they believed in Christ and they wanted to spread a good word, but the fact that they were kind of hypocritical didn't didn't really ... umm, sit well with a lot of people, you know?

Mmhmm.
Like, know that these guys were out there, you know, like, you know, with drugs and girls and stuff like that and, you know, so when, you know, I hear about that I kind of, like, just... It kind of loses it for me. It's like the message is still good, but the fact that somebody is delivering that message but they can't live up to it themselves is kind of disappointing, you know?

Yeah.
Umm, some other bands... There's some bands I really like, like Sacred Warrior and Veni Domine and Solitude Eternus. They have really cool messages, too. I don't know anything about them – whether they can live up to what they're singing about or not – and so that is kind of cool, cause I can just figure that they can keep up with what they are talking about, you know?

Uh-huh, yeah. I think it kind of points back to the whole thing, too, about an absolute. I think the fact that people get mad over hypocrisy... I think that points to the fact that each of us deep down inside believes that there is a right and a wrong. If somebody's, you know, talking about the right way or they're preaching that we really have ... we expect them to, uhh, live by that example and I think it is such a strong reaction people have that it – to me – seems to point to kind of a built-in knowledge of right and wrong that I think God put there.
Yeah, yeah. I kind of agree with that, but I also tend to look at the fact that everybody's got like a slightly different gauge. Like, you know, some people will say, 'Someone killed somebody in self defense,' and then the degree of what the self defense was... Like, if they were actually threatened and they knew they were gonna die in that second and then defended themselves, killing somebody ... or if you know somebody just came into their house and just stood there and didn't know what they were gonna do and then they kill them and so that's self defense; it's like, there's so many shades to the whole thing. If somebody had a knife to your throat and was about to slit your throat, then that's pretty clear cut, but if somebody just enters your house and doesn't actually threaten you, would it still be a clear cut case of self defense?

Uh-huh.
I am just the kind of person ... I just can't help thinking of so many scenarios and then saying, "Is this right or wrong?"

Yeah, I'd hate to have to be the judge that makes that decision.
Yeah, I hear ya

I think it was King Solomon who had two women who were claiming a child to be theirs and he says, "Ok, we are just gonna cut the child down the middle and give each of you half," and the one that said, "No, no, you give it to her..." He knew that she was the mother, cuz she cared more about the baby than getting her way...
Yeah, right.

That kind of wisdom is what it takes to figure some of this stuff out.
Yeah, well, you know, wisdom... It's pretty easy to get knowledge, but wisdom is definitely a whole separate entity there.

Yeah, true; and for the record I have to say that P.O.D. doesn't claim to fly under the banner of Christian metal. They would probably feel uncomfortable being compared to Stryper, but they do have a deep faith in Christ and, you know, their music definitely expresses where they are coming from.
Mmhmm, that's cool.

Yeah it seems like, if you have an art from, that who you are is going to be expressed in the art form...
Mmhmm, the thing with our band is it's like, you know, we've got guys who are Christian members and we've got guys that really aren't Christian or whatever, you know? And it's just, like... Man, I forgot what I was going to say.

How do those other guys feel about that?
Well, it's just kinda like everybody is free to do what they want and sometimes we have discussions, but...

Continued next page

Photo by Ryan Russell

DELETED SCENES

What Mastodon Says

I've probably only got enough time for one last question, so if you can, elaborate on some of the inspiration for some of the lyrical themes on this album?
Brann: Well, we kind of use the mountain for a metaphor for any kind of life struggle. With us, we always choose something really monolithic like a mountain or a whale or grey horse or our name, Mastodon. It's a giant elephant. Everything has to be, like, epic all the time with us. We just really dig that. Like life, just gigantic. Not many things out there are bigger than mountains, so… And there's a lot of different things that can happen to you on the mountain. So, we thought it would be a cool place to start at. We could also chip in lyrically and write this kind of loose story about climbing a mountain and just keep it earthy and keep it with these creatures that you run into and always have that in the back of your head – you're being chased, you're starving, you get sideswiped by an avalanche near the top of the mountain. You're hallucinating. You're eating your own flesh. You know, we just sat and brainstormed: 'Here's what can happen.' We just kind of kept that in mind. A lot of lyrics got cut. There wasn't room for all the lyrics we were writing for the whole story. We had to trim it down a bit and get it to a point where it still made sense and flowed well, but it wasn't like… We weren't singing over every single part. You've got to let it breathe every once in a while.

I've got one last quick question that I've got to ask for some of my old school readers: Have you guys run across or are you familiar with – there's a band called Mastedon from the early 90s on the West Coast had a couple of albums out.
Is this the Christian band?

Yeah.
We haven't run into them, but someone brought us a tape of theirs or something.

What did you think?
I didn't listen to it, but it looks cool. (laughs) 'Oh, they're a Christian band? That's weird.'

Yeah, they had the singer who replaced Steve Walsh in Kansas – John Elefante. And they had a record company called Pakaderm, and so they named their band Mastedon. They spelled it differently.
Okay. Yeah.

Well, Brann, I appreciate hanging out and spending some time talking with you.
Cool, man.

Best of luck. I hope to see you on the road sometime. I'll hand you a copy of the magazine and show you the interview or something.
Cool. Thanks, man.

✖

Steel Prophet cont'd

...nobody really says, "Well, you're stupid, cuz this is what you think..." You've gotta let people come to their own conclusions and part of the reason we just don't just wanna be known as a Christian band it is just because we've seen a lot of people that are into Christian music and Christian bands that are just too narrow minded or ridged for us to wanna be lumped in with that, you know?

Uh-huh.
We know what we believe and what we think and what we want and stuff like that, but then a lot of these people tend to judge the band and the members if, you know, and make judgments on if they're fit to be spreading the Word, or something like that. I just think it's ridiculous for other people to be judging that kind of thing. I mean, obviously, you make your own opinions, but it's just like some people – they've just got no business making ... judging other people. That's probably the reason why a lot of people will think we are a Christian band by reading some of the lyrics or something like that, but then it's just we don't wanna be categorized by that.

Uh-huh. It can certainly be awkward to take a band or some sort of entity and for one or two members to decide, 'Ok, this is gonna be a such and such entity and everybody else has to buy into this or else we're not gonna go anywhere.' That's kind of a different scenario than, you know, some kids from a youth group getting saved and saying, "Ok, let's do a Christian band. Let's make this a ministry and let's, you know...
Right, right.

...Do this and that.
Yeah, and that's the thing. Me and Rick write whatever we want in our lyrics and nobody objects, but ... I don't know. It's not that easy, not that simple.

Mmhmm. Alright, was there any questions that you'd like me to cover I didn't touch on?
Umm, I can't really think of anything off the top of my head, man.

Ok, well, cool. If there's anything I could pray for ya, uhh, let me know.
Ok.

✖

ALBUM REVIEWS

STRYPER (AUDIO BOOK)
LOUD N' CLEAR
While the recently re-printed book of the same name is an enthralling read about this band's groundbreaking history, hearing them politely read in this audio book somehow brings up the excitement level of these stories, as they come alive and bring the listener to the edge of their seat, leaning in to hear what God did next through these long-haired metallers. Most fascinating are all the stories of miracles that followed the band near its inception; yet these 6 discs (there's an mp3 version available as well) continue on to cover the band's career right up to the *Reborn* album and recent tours. [Classic CD Books] Doug Van Pelt

TOURNIQUET
TILL SVERIGE MED KARLEK (DVD)
This DVD has been billed as the best quality live show from the band on video to date. While aspects of this are true, there are a few shortcomings. Granted, there are multiple camera angles throughout (save for any good ones of Ted Kirkpatrick), but the sound quality isn't quite up to snuff and the film is grainy much of the time. Playing to an enthusiastic and appreciative Swedish crowd, Aaron Guerra is back with the band, proving he's probably the best guitarist Tourniquet has ever had. Vocalist Luke Easter sounds good, and Steve Andino (bass) holds down the rhythm parts really, really well. Ted's drum solo for this outing is new to these ears, Mr. Kirkpatrick going crazy to a sort of techno sample piped in over the P.A. Highlights? "The Tomb of Gilgamesh" and "The Skeezix Dilemma Part II" performed live, from *Microscopic View of a Telescopic Realm*, showcasing how great that album truly is. And the band played a couple songs from *Where Moth and Rust Destroy*. Extras include "Pecking Order" from Cornerstone 2002, rehearsal footage from 2005, and various footage of "If I Was There," from an acoustic performance by the band to a stop motion fan video and ending with a Wisconsin church's Easter service rendition of the song.
[Tourniquet Prod./Pathogenic] Chad Olson

BRIDE
SKIN FOR SKIN
Someone's made Bride mad, and they never sounded nastier, (possibly) never heavier. Not since *Snakes...* (yep) has Troy Thompson's riffs sounded like they could stop your heart from beating or beat it back into life again. "Inside Ourselves" has more soloing than I ever remember hearing from Troy. The drum sounds all over are monstrous. Bride has returned back to what they do best – flat out rock. "Fuel and Fire" reminds me of what Disciple used to sound like. Give this album a listen and most of you will be glad you did. [Retroactive] DVP

ANGEL 7
BLACK AND WHITE
This band is made up of two guys from Russia. And yes, that's Russian (I think) that drummer/bassist/keyboardist/programmer Slava Malinin is screaming. Who better to unleash a black metal onslaught than Scandinavia's neighbors to the East? The musicianship and chops are amazing and shredding (especially the guitar playing of Nikolay Kiriljuk). Bombworks Records should get an award for travelling the furthest to uncover some great metal gems. [Bombworks] DVP

VARIOUS ARTISTS
UP FROM THE ASHES
OFFICIAL BOOTLEG (DVD)
In case you didn't get your fill of the UFTA 1 festival on the recently released *Holy Soldier* DVD, the *Official Bootleg* DVD from the festival has now been released. About two hours in length, the DVD features one song from each band's show, including Once Dead, Ultimatum and Neon Cross, as well as backstage interviews with each band performed by none other than our own Doug Van Pelt. The sound and video quality isn't the greatest, but it is better than I expected. Though this extremely limited DVD (hand numbered to 100) is not commercially available, you can obtain a copy by contacting Roxx Productions. [Roxx] Chris Beck

DEUTERONOMIUM
STREET CORNER QUEEN
This band loves diversity, it seems, as they sway between guttural street metal a la Motorhead meets Metal Church and furious death metal, with Miika Partala's full-of-muchous vocals on the former, and that perfect shrieking black metal sound on the latter. They even whip out a surprise with "Red River" as one of five bonus tracks. The highlight of Deuteronomium's sound is definitely the tight musicianship of Partala and Kalle Paju's guitar playing, as well as the solid rhythm section provided by bassist Manu Lehtinen and drummer JJ Kontoniemi. [Maanalainen] DVP

DIVINEFIRE
INTO A NEW DIMENSION
So many euro-metal bands these days seem to set the drummer on 16th note bass rolls, and build the songs around that, making song after song begin to sound repetitive. While Divinefire would fall into that category, I am not complaining, they do it well. Sonically clean and brilliant; musically fast and cutting; and lyrically bold with those amazing powerhouse melodic (with occasional growl) vocals as always. If you like the euro-melodic-power-metal style of such bands as Hammerfall, Iron Savior, Helloween, Edguy and the like, you should love this third installment (I do).
[Rivel] Jeff McCormack

IMAGES OF EDEN
SUNLIGHT OF THE SPIRIT
If you've kept up with metal since it went underground in the mid-90's, then you know that there are two record labels that have majored in releasing quality melodic metal – Lance King's Nightmare Records and Christian Rivel's Rivel Records. Images of Eden are a dynamic and progressive metal band with ultra clean production and high end vocals somewhere between Iron Maiden's Bruce Dickinson and Y&T's Dave Meniketti. Mostly melodic songs here, with the epic title track suite taking center stage. Good stuff. [Nightmare] DVP

Surf this: classiccdbooks.com, tourniquet.net, retroactiverecords.net, bombworksrecords.com, roxxproductions.com, maanalainenlevykauppa.com, rivelrecords.com, nightmare-records.com

NORMA JEAN

REDEEMER

Nu-Metal. Does anyone out there actually remember what I'm talking about? C'mon now! Will anyone out there actually admit that they've: a) listened to it and enjoyed it; b) bought an album or two from some popular nu-metal bands; and/or c) been to a concert or festival the features nu-metal? That's it – I see those hands being raised out there. Don't be afraid to reveal the truth about your sordid musical pasts, for, you see, I too have made the very same mistakes, have come to grips with those mistakes, and have found a variety of ways in which to move past & grow from those mistakes. Everyone can make this journey without feeling overly burdened by the guilt and shame – join me.

OK then – now that we've all confessed the mistake of buying into the possibility that nu-metal was a valid re-incarnation of metal, let us examine what actually happened to the genre and why things soured so quickly. First, there were some credible & talented bands at the onset, hence it was easy to get excited about where things were going – Rage Against The Machine & (early) Korn attempted to bring something new to the musical table. RATM had Zach La Rocha's truly righteous indignation & the excellence of Tom Morello's guitar playing, while Korn brought passion and fervency to their musicianship, even if they never learned how to play those lovely 7-string guitars.

Second, however, nu-metal became increasingly easy to mimic – thanks to those aforementioned lovely 7-string guitars (Ibanez had to have made a killing selling those things in the late 90's & early 00's). As long as you sang/screamed about how pissed off you were, kept to a fairly basic verse-chorus-verse-chorus song format, and kept your guitar tuned down to D (or C#, if you dared), you were guaranteed a record contract, a hit single, and your own tour (or at least a decent slot on someone else's nu-metal tour). And third, since radio stations pandered to the ears & wallets of America's 16-25 year-olds and their love for angry, yet still easy-to-stomach, pop-formatted songs, our ears were inundated with the same ideas & concepts for far too long. I've said it before and I'll say it again – the radio is dead, unless someone gets rid of Clear Channel and various other monolithic media conglomerates.

I say all of that to say this: hardcore, when it first came to prominence, could have easily gone the way of nu-metal had it not learned the fundamental aspect of genre-making: always be willing to reinvent yourself; i.e. stagnation kills. Yes, hardcore has been duly criticized for how easy it is for a glut of copycat bands to flood the market, but hardcore (no matter what sub-genre you're referring to) has welcomed the tweaking of its sound by its most talented participants. Whether a band starts creating tech-metal, screamo, melodic hardcore, or anything else related, the inner impulse remains the same – there's a willingness to press, push, and stretch the boundary lines of musicality. Hardcore music (whether consciously or unconsciously) has picked up a great many tools & tricks of the trade from jazz, specifically the drive to never be afraid of scrapping what worked in the past to explore where your band's sound might want to go.

It is in this spirit that Norma Jean approached their creation of *Redeemer*. There is no recreation of *O' God, The Aftermath* (and certainly not *Bless The Martyr & Kiss The Child*) present here, no matter how good the record sales, tour profits, and general growth in notoriety may have been. To put it bluntly, this album overtly eschews all of the frenetic stops & starts that electrified *BTM&KTC* and rejects the meandering time signatures and math-laden power of *OGTA* to emerge with a sound that's stronger than anything else they've created (and let's not even mention the horror that was Luti-Kriss). *Redeemer* allows Norma Jean to stand tall with a coherent focus that they've never displayed before, taking the time to trim off the excess and bombast of the earlier records and let their true talent rise to the fore.

And as cheesy as this descriptor is, *Redeemer* is a mature record, one that has made by a group of guys that knows each other, inside & out. It is that kind of knowledge that creates space for a level of musical exploration that couldn't occur if the band wasn't confident in their component parts. *Redeemer* stretches but never breaks. Such qualities are most evident in tracks like "The End of All Things Will Be Televised" and "Amnesty Please" – all songs filled with the band's finest lyrical content and highest-quality guitar work (as in, I can actually discern a slight semblance of a guitar solo!). And as "A Small Spark Vs. A Great Forest," the album's truly standout song, declares, "What did you say? Don't speak. You nailed all your words down on me and it felt like a blind guide, leading me into quicksand. So fight fair, fight fair." Who can't relate to those sentiments?!?

Unequivocally, Norma Jean's *Redeemer* is hardcore at its finest. Do imperfections exist? Absolutely – there are times when the band tries too hard to achieve a new level of aesthetic abstraction that the song loses your attention, but the overall themes of and talent level on this album are too potent to ignore. And don't even get me started on the striking & startling artwork on the insert – few bands work as hard to present a unified whole between the aural and visual worlds.

Does everyone get hardcore? No, they really don't and they probably never will – it's too quirky, too loud, too dark, and usually there's no adherence to traditional song structure. But, to me, that's what keeps hardcore (and other contemporary expressions of metal) thriving in a music world consumed by easy money and less-than-genuine methods of marketing. Hardcore music represents what making music is & should be all about – passionate people coming together for the love of creating, people who aren't going to settle for the average and sonically acceptable, just to make a quick buck. Remember – it was the combination of radio play & general over-exposure that killed nu-metal in the long run.

[Solid State] Adam P. Newton

ZION

THRILLSEEKER: A LIVE HISTORY

Zion was a really cool melodic hard rock band (fronted by current X-Sinner vocalist, Bon Scott sound-alike, Rex Scott). This collection of tunes is more demo/outtakes than a true live album, and thus is truly only really attractive to collectors and fans. The sonics, unfortunately, don't stand up to the stellar production standards that David Zaffiro brought to their one studio album. [Retroactive] DVP

Surf this: solidstaterecords.com, retroactiverecords.net

schooler, rock and roll guy that wants to play guitar and yet now the catalog you have has these incredible tones and people think of you as a world class player, and yet you say, 'It comes from this.' It's kind of amazing and interesting that something – some art that someone can really enjoy listening to comes from a place like that, where you're not trying to be Alex Lifeson and practicing 8 hours a day to try to get his chops down.

I don't have anything against that, either. I wanna be quick to add, because a lot of people I play with are very much that kind of player and who I respect also – massively, for the dedication and what they've achieved and what they can do. I just have always been… What I love in music is non-technical. But I love the magic. The magic in the songs speak to me things that can't be defined that make it good. That is what I'm attracted to and what I want to be a part of. So, that's what I concentrate my focus on – that undefined, whether it's spiritual or artistic element of it – of how it affects the soul when you hear it. That's the important part of it. That's why we listen to it – whether we recognize it or not – is how it makes us feel when we hear it. The fact that it does affect us deeply on a spiritual level, a mental level, in all ways it really does affect us. The sound affects us. I'm more abstract in exploring the feelings of everything. What I do is I try different tones or try different things to play in order to impart the emotion – to impart the feel. That always being the goal, and the other part of it just being really inconsequential, as far as whatever it may be, as long as it accomplishes that goal. That's how I've always looked at it.

You're talking about music that touches the soul and how it makes you feel… I'm just curious as a person how you would describe or address the really aggressive music – whether it's Pantera for you or Rage Against The Machine for me or something that brings up incredible intense emotions. Some people would say it starts fights. Some people would say it's violent. Some people might say something else. When you're talking about feelings and how it makes you feel, how do you feel about really aggressive and intense music like that?

The way I feel is that it's individual, and there's really no blanket rule or statement for things like music that fall into the category of art. I really feel like every single individual will look at a painting and get something different from it. Maybe nothing, maybe get the whole world from it, but every single individual that looks at something or hears something, they get to hear it in their way, and they are the only one on earth hearing it that way. So, just like we have fingerprints. That's truly how I feel about it. I feel like, yeah, that music may and can cause undesirable results in somebody if they're in the right place for that to be the case, but I don't personally lump aggression in music… For myself, I know that I've never listened to an aggressive in my whole life ever and wanted to fight. You know what I mean? Because that's not me. I don't want to fight. It has nothing to do with that. But we do all feel aggression at some point in our lives. And rightful aggression at times in our lives. We can even be a really positive, joyous thing that requires some aggression. To me, all of those things are individual, and that's why we all are born so different. I like the color blue a whole lot, and the next person likes the color red a whole lot. That's not learned, it's just personal preference that's built in. We're all so completely different that, to me, there are just no generalized rules about music in any way. It's a matter of the individual when they listen to it. If something inspires negative things, then why listen to it? I personally don't do that, but I do love music – for lack of a better term – music with balls, because that is also a real part of life at times. And sometimes it needs to feel identifying with that. But I don't listen to anything that doesn't give me positive reinforcement in those areas. The really aggressive stuff – if it doesn't make me feel good or charged up to go do this or that in a positive way or something. I don't listen to things that bring negative to me at all. I don't care to waste my time like that. I can listen to just about any kind of music to be inspired from it – depending on what the real heart is behind it.

I can't think of ever stumbling on some type of music that makes me feel the wrong way or something or I don't want to listen to it again. I either like it or I don't. I can't think of an example of ever…

Exactly. And there are many colors and flavors for all of us, because we're all so different. I think that's awesome.

Yeah, me too.

✖

THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET

By Steve Rowe

METAL GENERATIONS

For the sake of the picture let us make a metal generation 10 years. Metal started in about 1970. The first generation was defined by Sabbath, Alice Cooper, Deep Purple & Motorhead. Starting in 1980 the 2nd genaration was defined by Maiden, Priest, Metallica and Slayer. The 90's were defined by Pantera, Manson, Cradle of Filth & Cannibal Corpse. Generarion 4 is still evolving with System of a Down, Arch Enemy, Opeth and Slipknot.

What do all these bands have in common? Anti-social themes, sex, drugs and Satan. Throughout the first 3 generations the emphasis on these themes became increasingly serious. In the beginning the bands were simply making shock music. Sure, I had to pick 4 bands for each generation & you have the right to pick a different 4. But, I think to some degree the level of insidiousness has decreased in the past 6 years. Bands going back to the more, 'let's just make shock music' idea.

Around 1975 the first generation of Christian metal started. Defined by Resurrection Band, Jerusalem, Barnabas and Stryper. In '85 the Christian metal scene exploded with Barren Cross, Bloodgood, Bride and Deliverance. '95 to '05: Demon Hunter, Underoath, Norma Jean and Extol. So, what will the 4th generation hold and what do people – both Christian and non-Christian – want from Christian bands?

The first generation was defined by Jesus, encouraging other Christians in their faith, evangelism and social Christian perspectives. The second generation was similar, with a strong focus on evangelism and giving Christians strong Jesus metal alternatives. Christians making art has recently become popular. Simply Christians presenting positive ideas. This is a great alternative to what the mainstream is offering. So, there has been a coming together of the Christian artists and the mainstream with Christians in bands sharing big stages with the most popular of non-Christian groups. Plus, there has been a huge combining of styles to a point where it is difficult to define really what metal and hard rock actually is.

So, from personal experience, what do young Christian kids want to hear? Most listen to the popular bands and we old-schoolers pray that the 4th generation of bands will bring back some balance, because I for one can see a yearning in young kids to hear songs about Christ. Young kids buying old re-issue CDs at Festivals by Bride and Bloodgood and young men in their late teens and early 20's wanting to play Jesus music again.

It is interesting that young bands are going back to the old ways. Successful mainstream band Wolfmother – all in their 20's – are doing the Sabbath, Deep Purple idea all over again. Christian bands like Narnia and Disciple are keeping the Jesus focused, evangelistic approach alive. So, will more young Christian bands reach back into the old days? I sold a guitar to a 13 year old boy a month ago, who has a vision to start a heavy metal church. Most Christians know that Alice Cooper and also Nicko McBrain from Maiden are now both professing born again Christians. So, may we all stay focused on what is most important in this apprenticeship that is our life. Ask yourself: What really matters here??

SOUND ADVICE

By Pastor Bob

As I sat in the chair with pain shooting up my arms, I began to feel like this whole ordeal was more of a right-of-passage in my life. These are times that define you and move you on to another stage of life.

I clearly remember the day when my voice started to crack, and my father explained to me that I was simply going through puberty. My voice changed all right. It was lower and deeper than anyone else in my class. I remember saying the Pledge Of Allegiance every day at school and only mouthing the words, because my voice sounded so out of place. That was 42 years ago.

Other events come to mind. Getting my drivers license. Graduating from High School. Playing in a band for the first time. Moving into my own apartment. Preaching in Church for the first time. And, of course, falling in love for the first time.

There have been many spiritual rights-of-passage as well. I remember well the day that I gave my heart to Jesus Christ. Even though I was only 5, it was a decision filled with emotion and determination. I can clearly recall the first time I realized that God was speaking to my heart. I remember reading the Bible fully aware for the first time that the Holy Spirit was ministering to me through its words. I remember God's comfort. Countless times. Feeling enveloped in his arms as he took me through crisis after crisis and then healed my heart.

These rights-of-passage are important. They become markers along the way in our lives that remind us of our growth and our commitments.

David is having a tough time in Psalm 13: "HOW LONG will You forget me, O Lord? Forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long must I lay up cares within me and have sorrow in my heart day after day? How long shall my enemy exalt himself over me? Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; lighten the eyes [of my faith to behold Your face in the pitchlike darkness], lest I sleep the sleep of death, Lest my enemy say, I have prevailed over him, and those that trouble me rejoice when I am shaken."

He is frustrated, confused, and feels very much alone. But then it occurs to David that he has been at this place before. His passage through this difficult time has already been purchased. David continues, "But I have trusted, leaned on, and been confident in Your mercy and loving-kindness; my heart shall rejoice and be in high spirits in Your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with me." (Amplified Version)

You see, David looks back over his life and realizes that God has given him milestones to remember. God has proven his love for him as he moves him safely through each difficult time. And, along with each passage, God has given him a lesson to remember and a story to tell.

I am thankful for my lessons and stories as well. That is the very thing that convinced me to go through this pain as I get my tattoo sleeves! My arms are now full of my stories of God's faithfulness to me in full color! It may be a bit unconventional for some, but for me it is another right-of-passage. It is a celebration of God's love and commitment that has seen me through many years of life.

SCOURGED FLESH - RELEASED FROM DAMNATION

'Scourged Flesh' reminds me of Mortification's self-titled era meets Paramaecium's 'Silent Carnage'. Dave Kilgallon's drumming is reminiscent of a young Jayson Sherlock. Full tilt Jesus Death Metal!

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